

OPEN INSTITUTION

Barack Obama Presidential Library & Museum



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Advisor: Sarah Whiting
M.Arch Thesis 2016
Rice University

RICE UNIVERSITY

**OPEN INSTITUTION:
BARACK OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM**

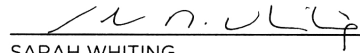
BY

DANIEL JIMÉNEZ

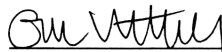
A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:



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APRIL, 2016

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the relationship between an institution and its context. An important cultural function of institutions is to draw from their environment to form narratives. Once established, these narratives influence a society's conception of itself. The Presidential Library is a particular kind of institution that frames the narrative of a Presidency and whose temple-like architectural form has historically indicated a view of the Presidency that is sacred and closed to new contribution. Conversely, this design is for a Presidential Library and Museum as an open institution, one whose form and material strategy embrace a view of the presidential legacy that includes multiple voices and is constantly shaped by the contributions of its context. The building does this through a number of formal moves, especially by placing its most public amenities in high-density urban intersections and by framing exhibition views such that they always integrate community center program.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Sarah Whiting for always challenging me and for being unbelievably generous with her time and thoughtful input;

Scott Colman for the fearless leadership that guided every thesis student from the first day of Pre-Thesis through to our final presentations and beyond;

RSA faculty and staff, especially Tanya Dominguez, Jenny Judge, Kyle Hendricks, and Hans Krause, for their unwavering support, advice, and help;

Evio Isaac, Jonathan Pan, and Pak Wa Lim for their model-making, photography, late nights, and general amazingness leading up to Pencils Down;

My studio mates for always being there to bounce ideas off, go for coffee breaks, and keep me sane;

My roommate Jeremy for helping with food, laundry, and errands during my hour of need;

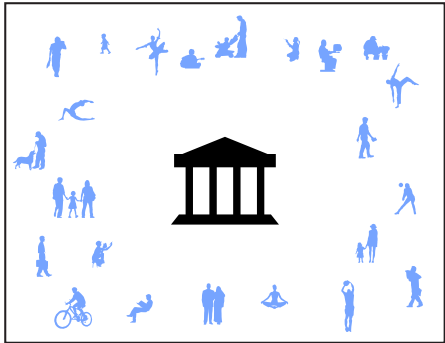
My family for their endless love and encouragement;

And to my best friend and future-wife Rachel for always supporting me in my goals.

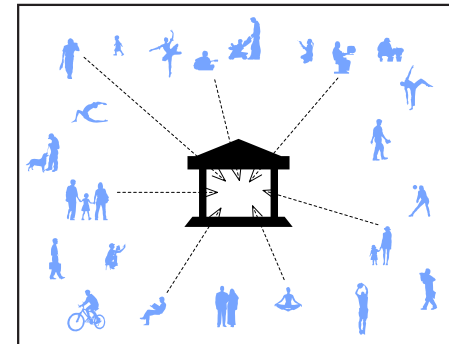
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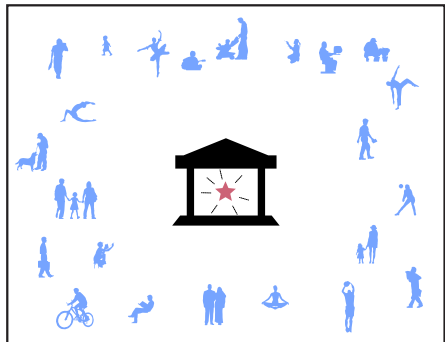
Ambition



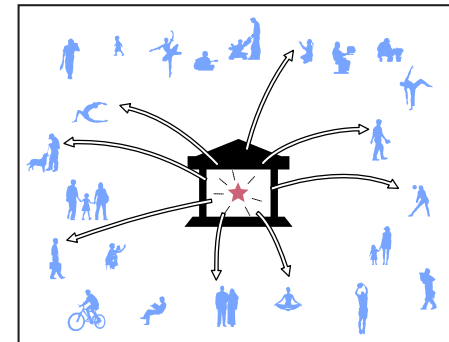
Institutions are necessarily located within a social context.



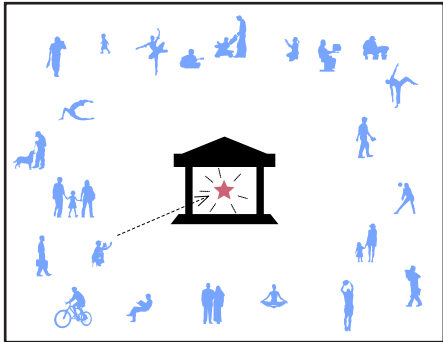
An important role of institutions is to draw from their context...



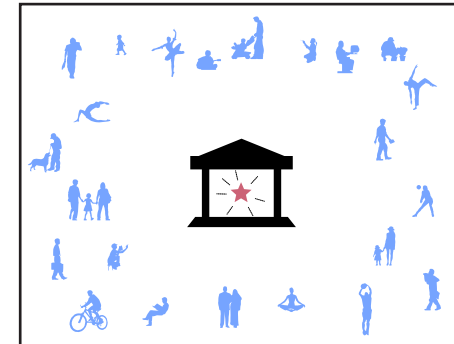
...to establish a social narrative about a specific subject matter.



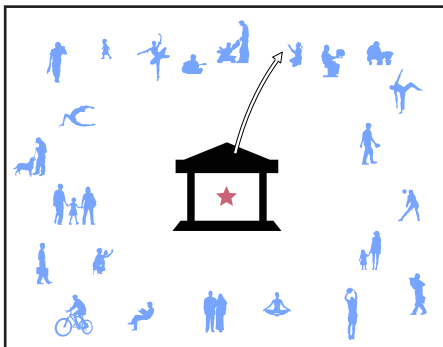
Once established, this narrative influences the way a society conceives of itself.



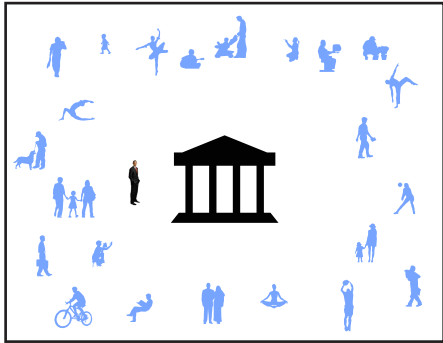
An example of this type of influence can be seen in the institution of the art museum, wherein the work of the individual artist...



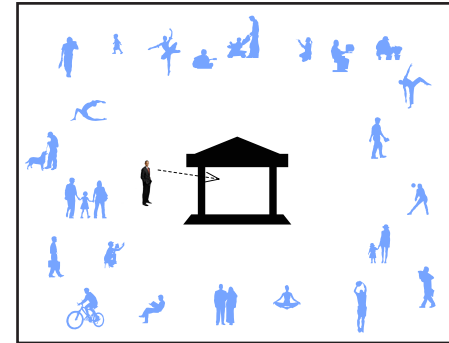
...becomes part of the institutional definition of what constitutes art. As a result...



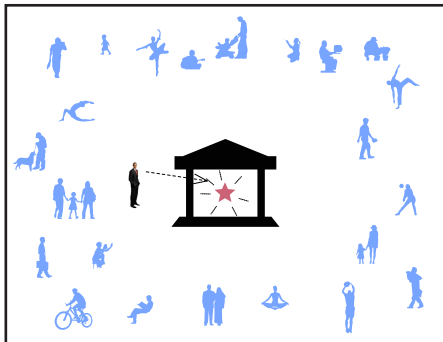
...other artists change their approach and the public at large view art and culture differently.



This project is concerned with a specific type of institution: the Presidential Library. In a Presidential Library...



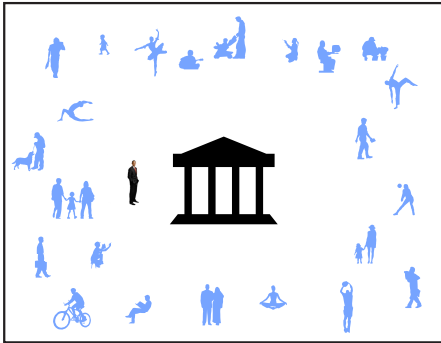
...the inclusive potential of institutions is jeopardized by how (in name) the center is meant to create a cultural narrative about...



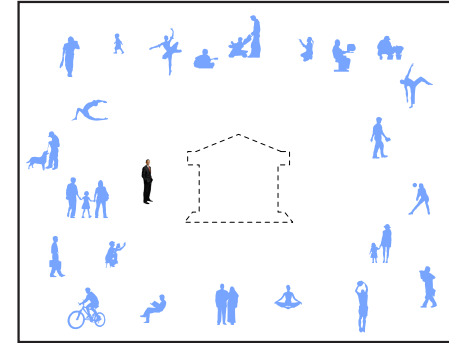
...a single person: the President of the USA. We have to ask ourselves if this conception of a Presidential legacy is in line with our values.



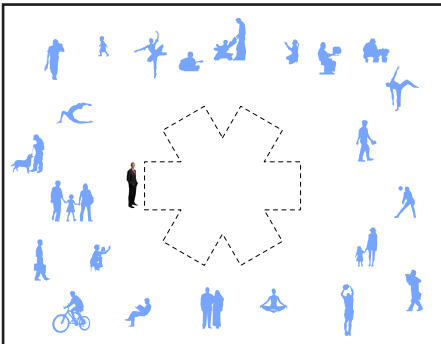
This emphasis on a single person whose time has come and gone is expressed architecturally by how most existing Presidential Libraries closely resemble temple architecture. This conveys a message that the Presidential legacy is something sacred, fixed in time, and closed to new contributions. These temples are closed institutions.



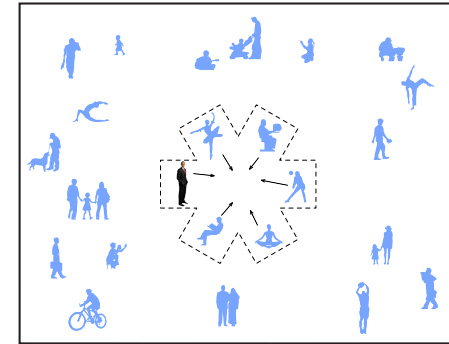
Rather than continuing to build temple-like Presidential Libraries that see the Presidential legacy as closed off to intervention...



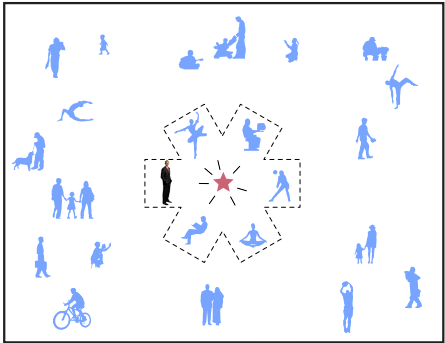
...the goal of this project is to open up the institution.



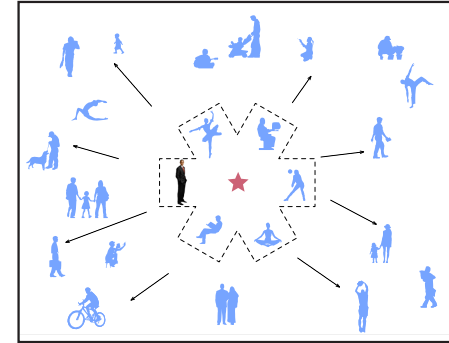
This opening is achieved through form and material interventions. Specifically, the form should be understood as both porous...



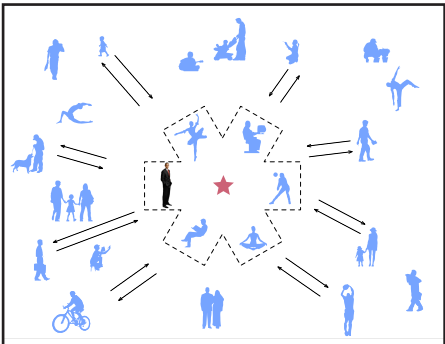
...and capable of displaying the activities of different audiences within the institution's own spaces of narrative-formation...



...to arrive at a cultural narrative of a Presidential legacy that is not comprised of one man, but of a much larger and more diverse population.



Consequently, this narrative can influence the broader public, empowering people to see themselves as actors in an ongoing narrative...



...in which the institution is a place that both draws meaning from its audience and radiates that meaning outward.

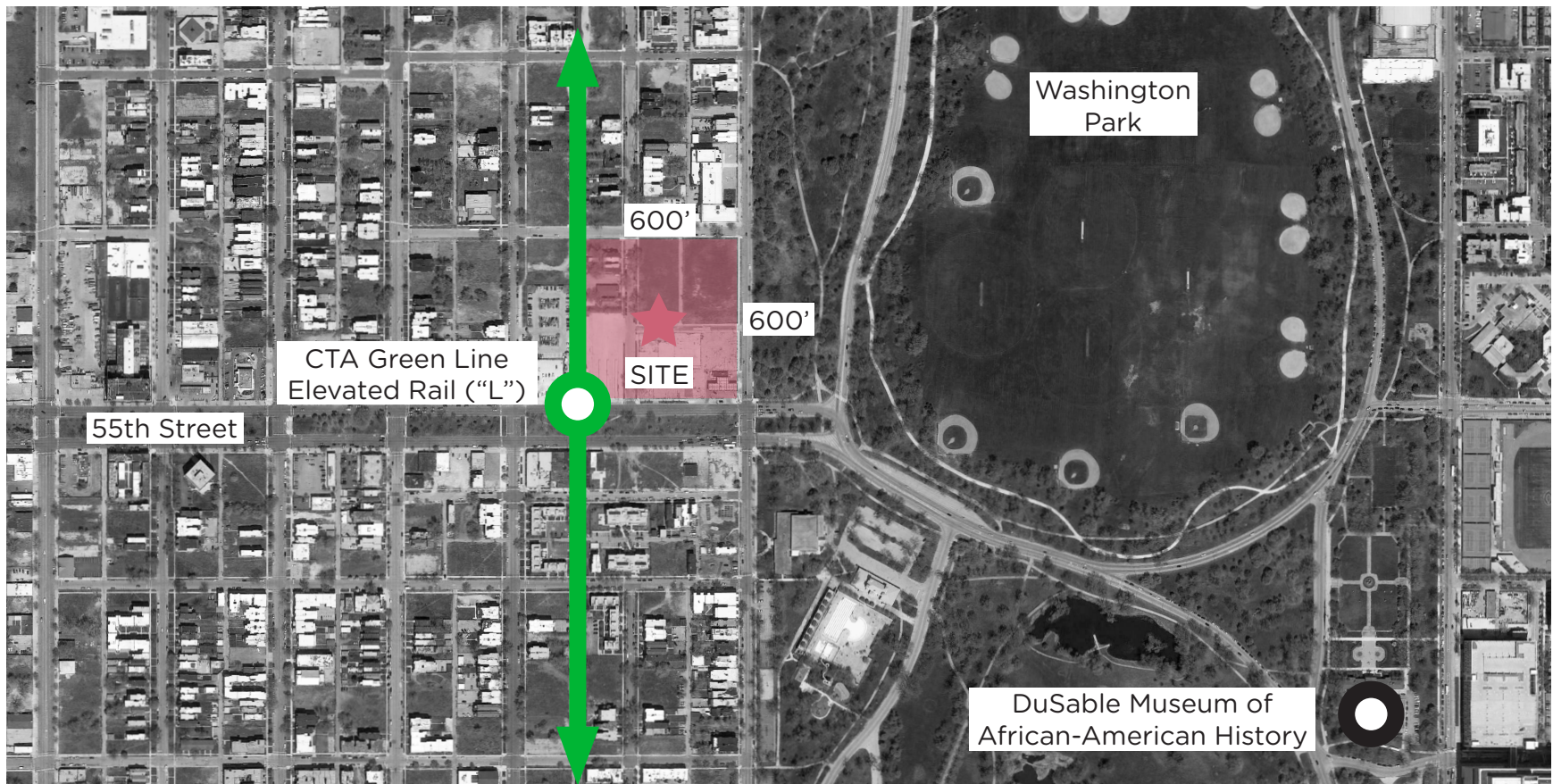
Site



The site for the project is located in the South Side of Chicago in the Washington Park neighborhood, about 6 miles south of the downtown Chicago Loop.

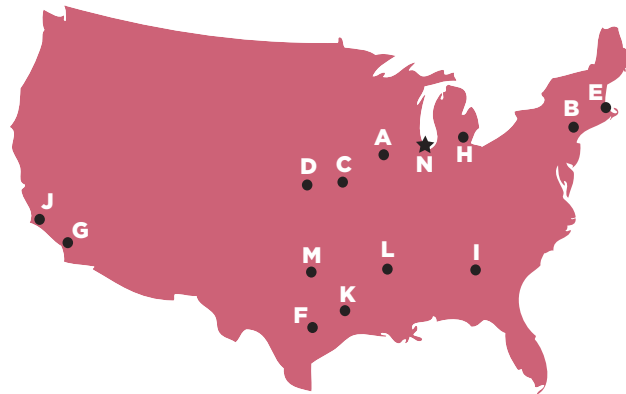


Furthermore, the site is located at the western edge of Washington Park, a 380-acre park that separates the Washington Park neighborhood (predominantly African-American and lower-income) from the Hyde Park neighborhood (predominantly white, higher income, and home to the University of Chicago).



The site is roughly 600' x 600' at the intersection of 55th Street and MLK Boulevard. It is flanked on the west by an metro station for the CTA elevated Green Line. Within walking distance in Washington Park is another important cultural institution: the DuSable Museum of African-American History.

Program



A
Herbert Hoover
West Branch, IA
47,169 SF



D
Dwight Eisenhower
Abilene, KS
109,254 SF



G
Richard Nixon
Yorba Linda, CA
55,373 SF



J
Ronald Reagan
Simi Valley, CA
147,400 SF



M
George W. Bush
Dallas, TX
210,864 SF



B
Franklin Roosevelt
Hyde Park, NY
108,750 SF



E
John F. Kennedy
Boston, MA
134,293 SF



H
Gerald Ford
Ann Arbor, MI
104,764 SF



K
George H.W. Bush
College Station, TX
116,527 SF



N
Barack Obama
Chicago, IL
TBD



C
Harry Truman
Independence, MO
96,612 SF



F
Lyndon Johnson
Austin, TX
139,267 SF



I
Jimmy Carter
Atlanta, GA
85, 592 SF



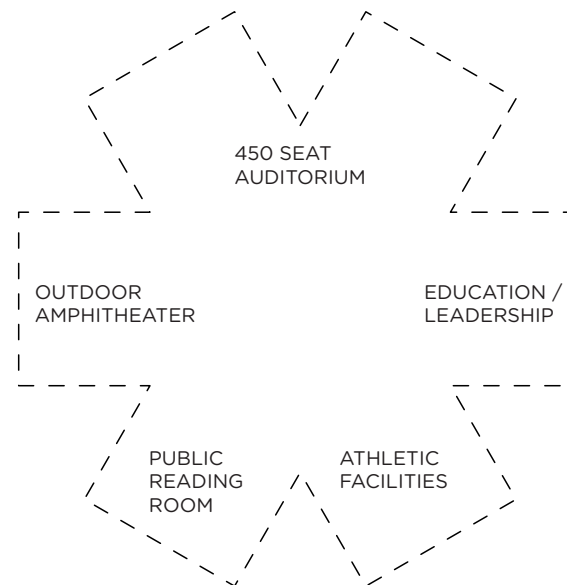
L
Bill Clinton
Little Rock, AR
152,122 SF

The above map shows the current Presidential Libraries under the jurisdiction of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The Obama Library will be the 14th such institution, and the only one in a large metropolitan area (excluding college campuses). The program of such institutions is, by now, well-established...

TYPICAL PRESIDENTIAL
LIBRARY HAS....



IN ADDITION,
OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL
LIBRARY HAS....

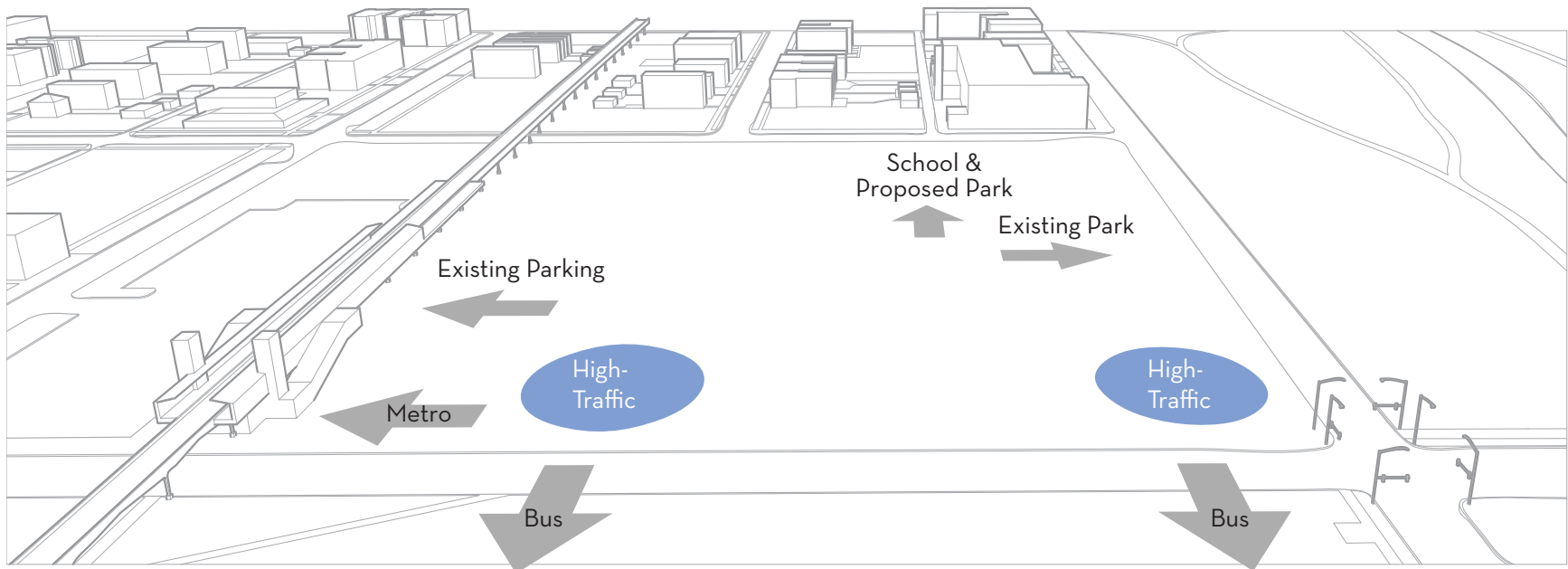


The typical Presidential Library is the home institution for two official entities: NARA and the non-profit foundation of the President. The federal government (through NARA) stores archival material associated with the President and runs a museum of that President's legacy. The Obama Library will be unique for its inclusion of community center program into the Presidential Library, privileging the local community as a valued audience.

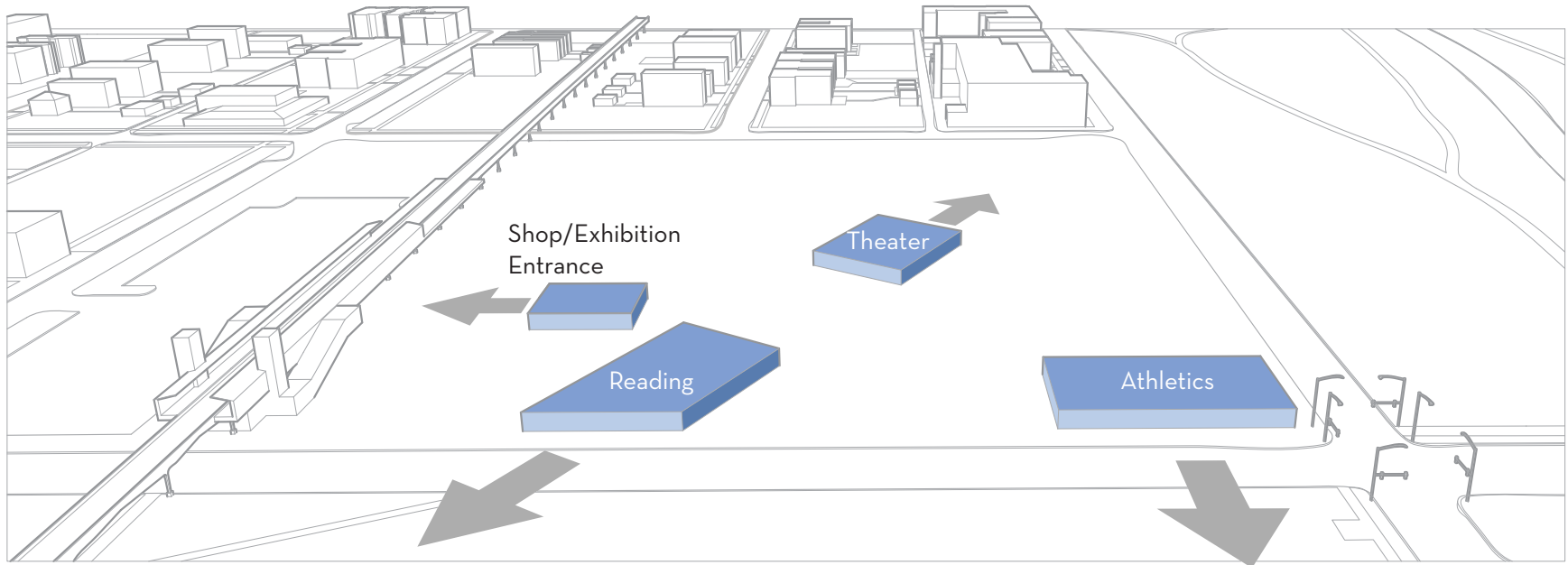
MUSEUM:	55,000 SF
- EXHIBITION	
- SHOP/TICKETING	
STORAGE / SUPPORT:	50,000 SF
- ARCHIVES	
- OTHER STORAGE	
- SUPPORT	
NARA / FOUNDATION:	39,000 SF
- NARA	
- FOUNDATION	
- RESIDENCE	
PUBLIC AMENITIES:	86,000 SF
- EDUCATION	
- AUDITORIUM/AMPH.	
- ATHLETICS	
- READING ROOM	
- CAFE	
TOTAL:	230,000 SF

Breakdown of program, including both as-given programs in the brief distributed by the Obama Foundation, as well as some additional program (reading room and expanded athletics zone) to make the project even more of a public asset.

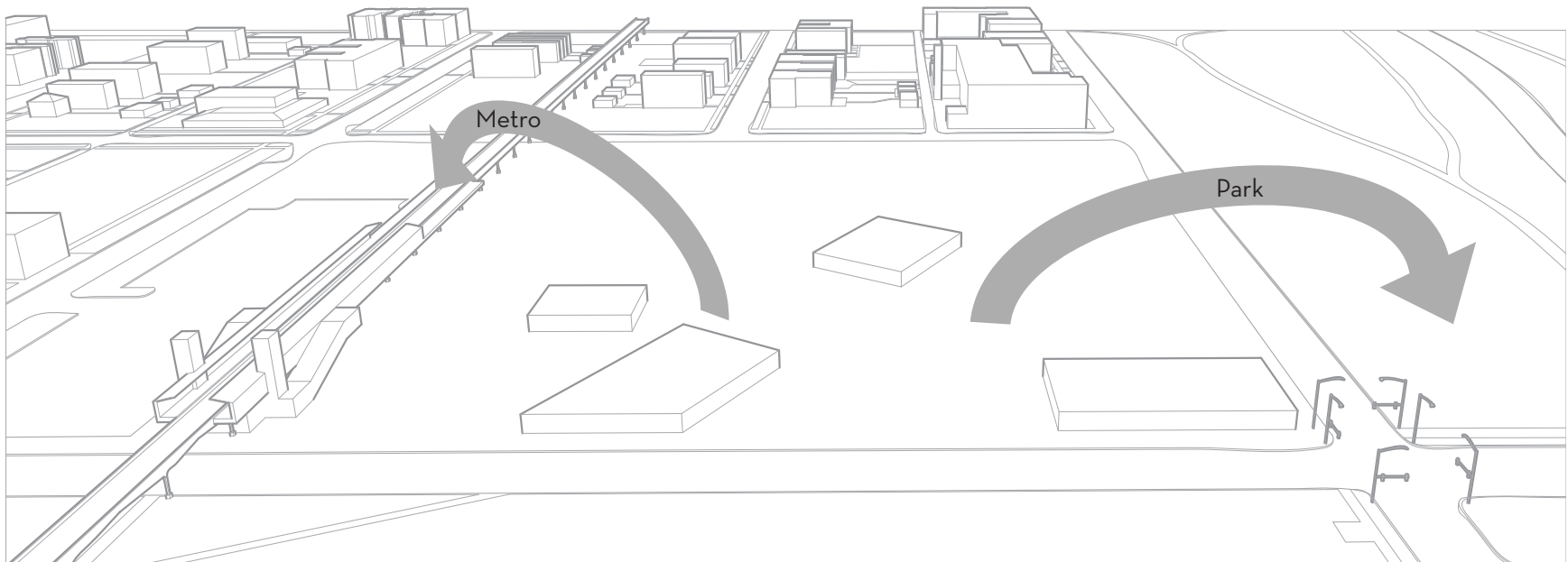
Design



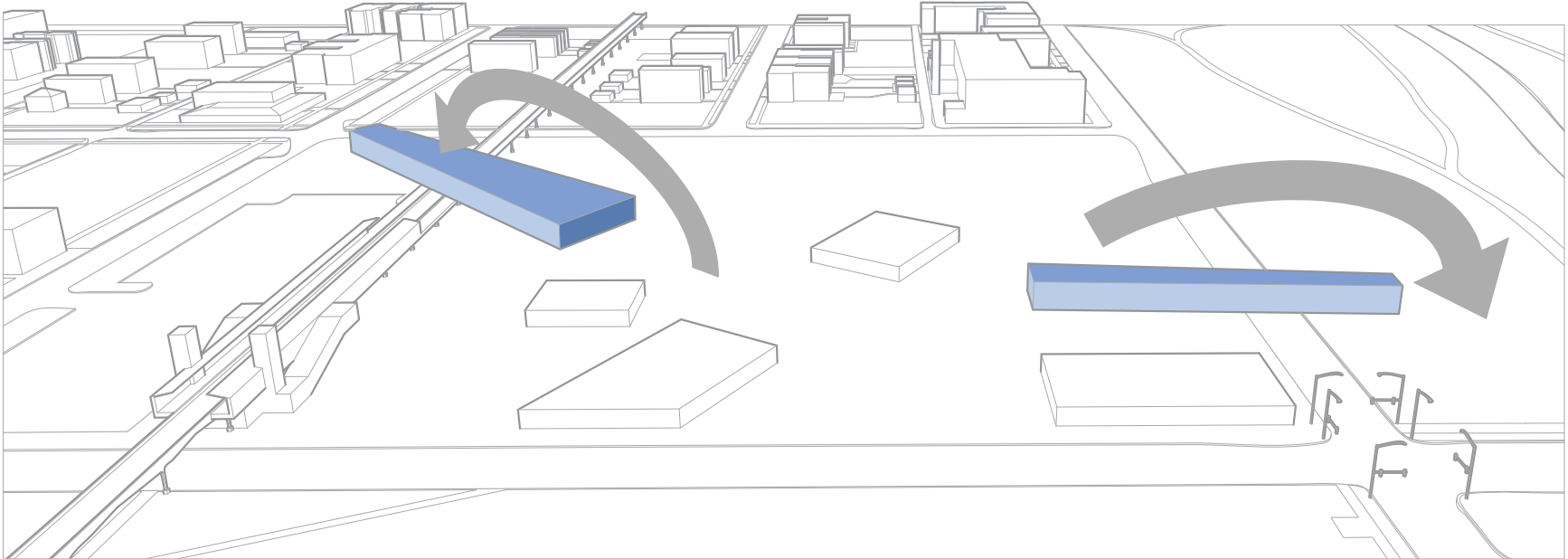
- 1 Identify relations to context, including high-traffic areas ideal for attracting public.



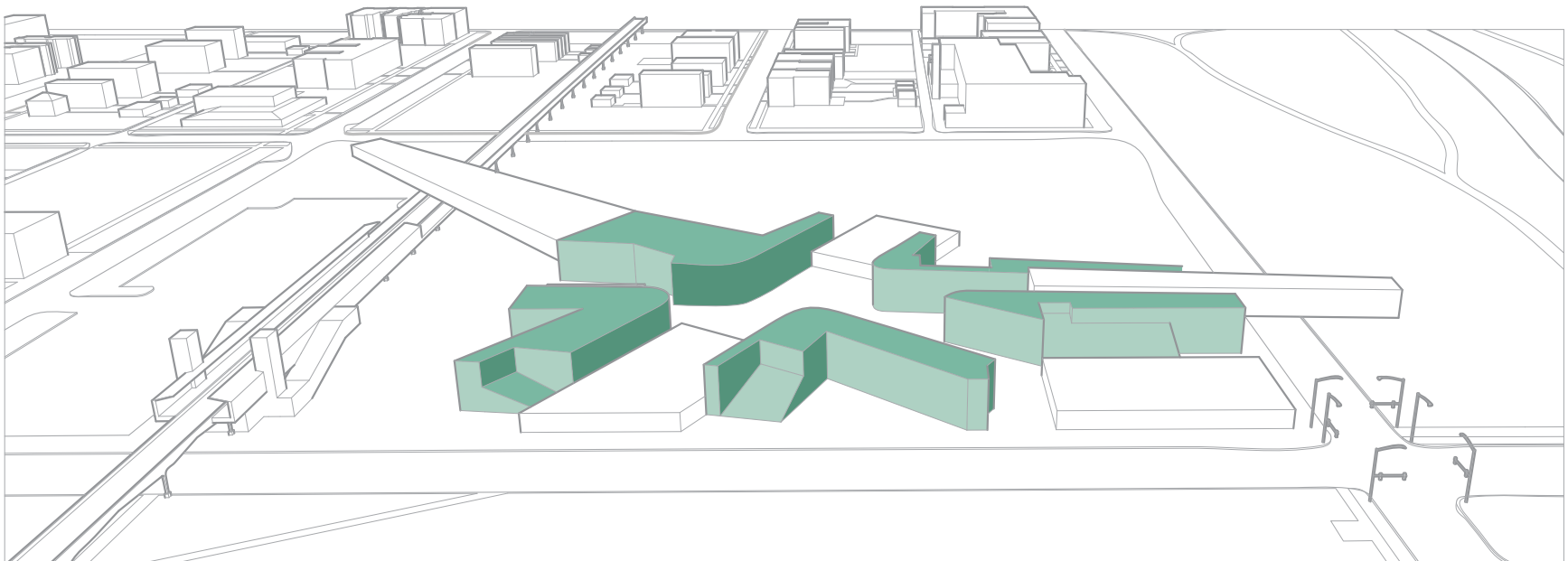
- 2 Place the most public program at high-traffic and high-visibility nodes; claim presence on urban street front.



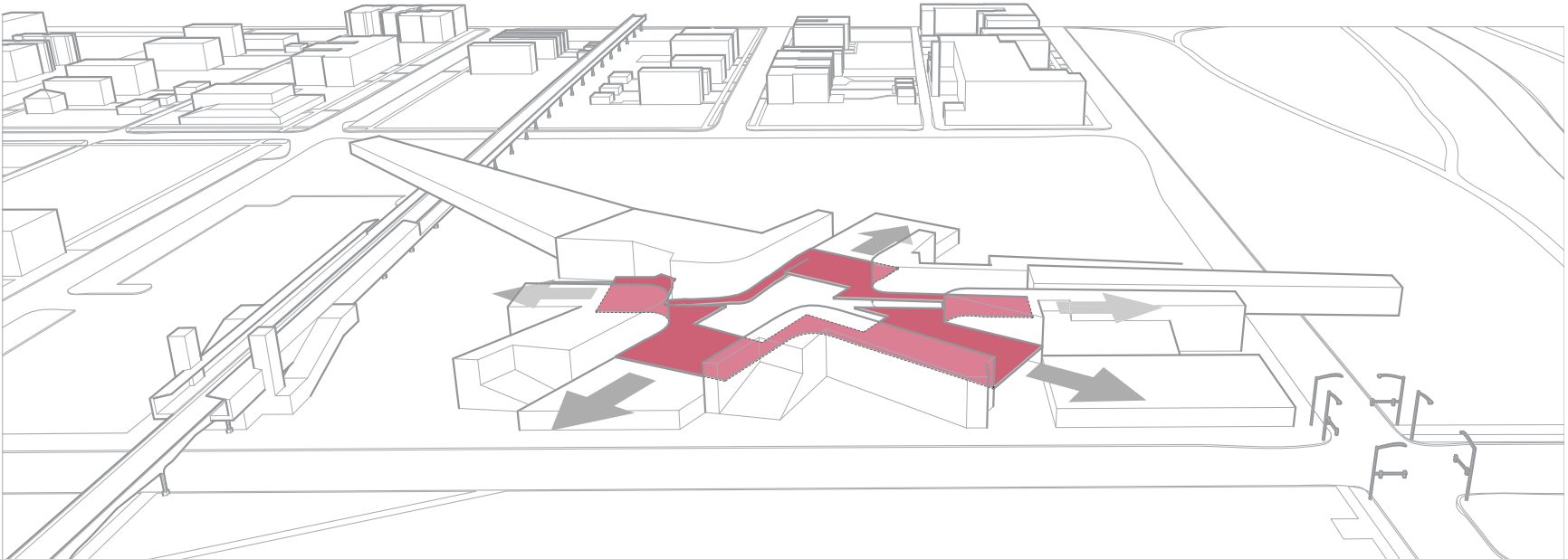
3 Identify existing public assets and infrastructures near the site



- 4 Connect the park and metro to new public program with bridge structures.

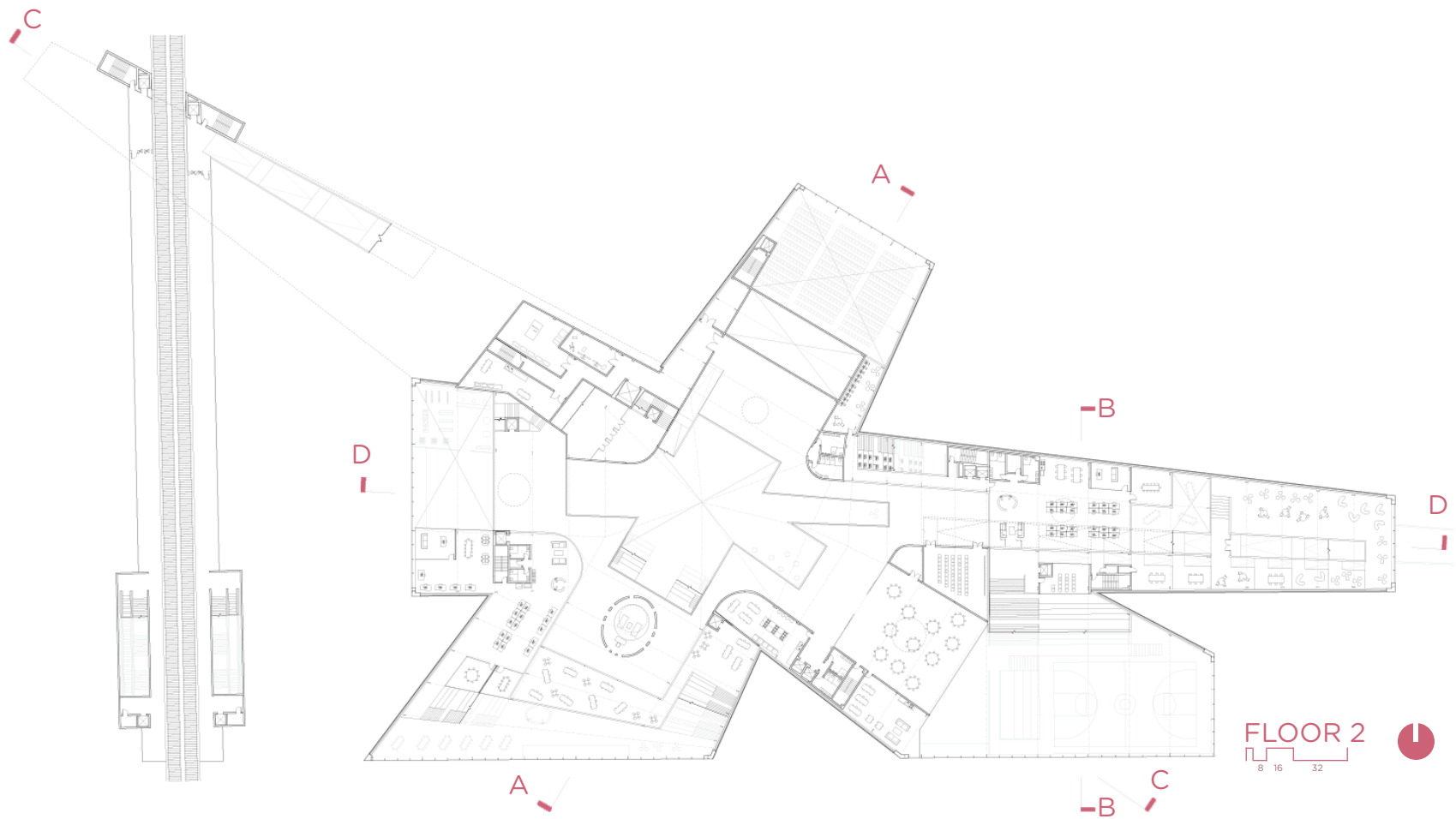


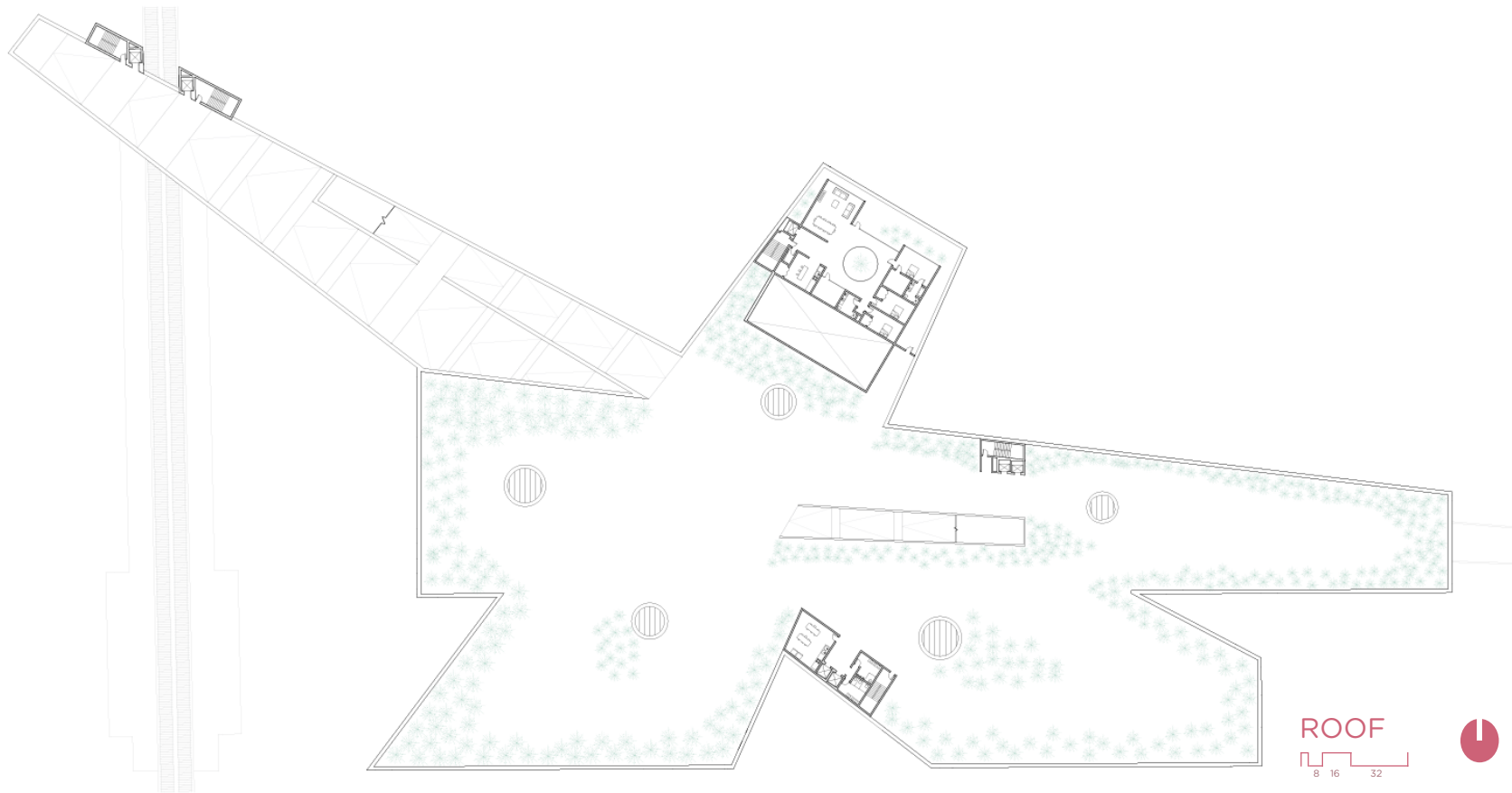
- 5 Place program that requires enclosed spaces along thickened edge to leave open access to a flexible central space.

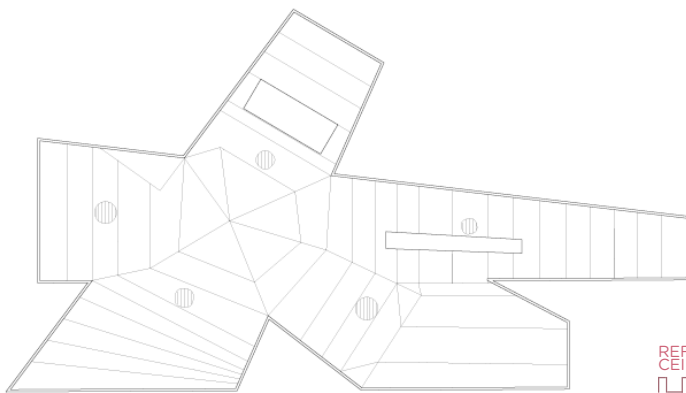


- 6 Weave in exhibition spaces, creating views onto community activity.





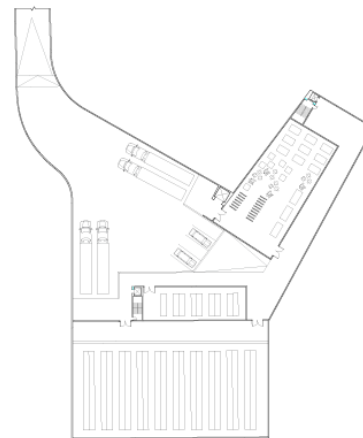




REFLECTED
CEILING PLAN



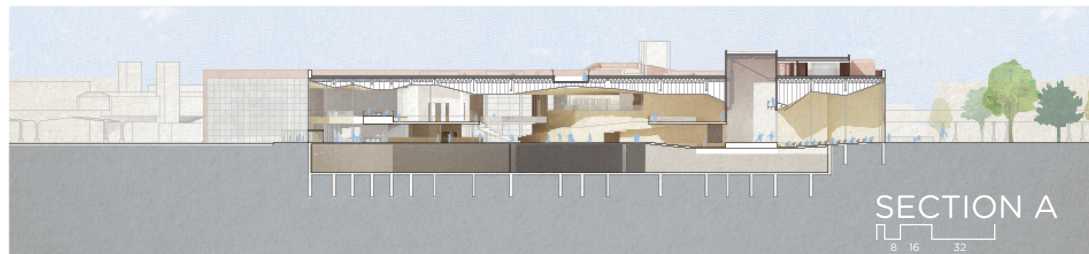
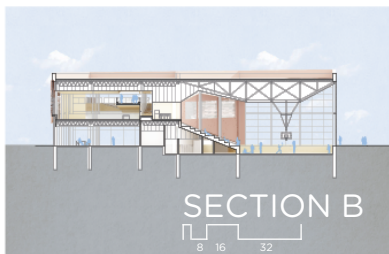
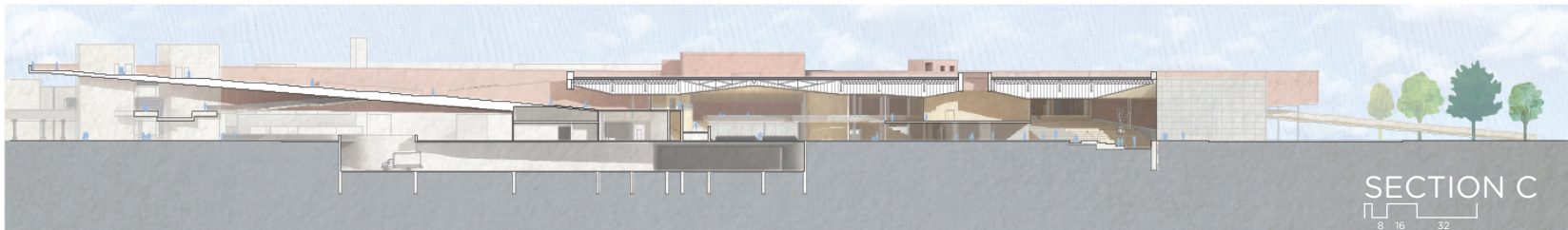
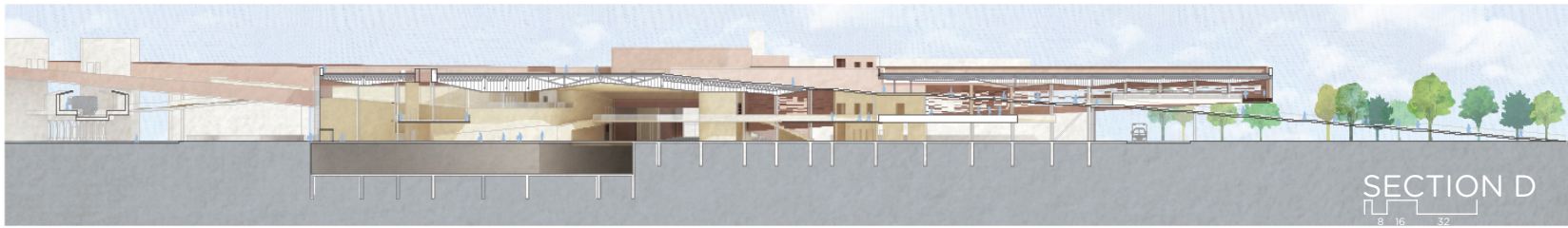
8 16 32

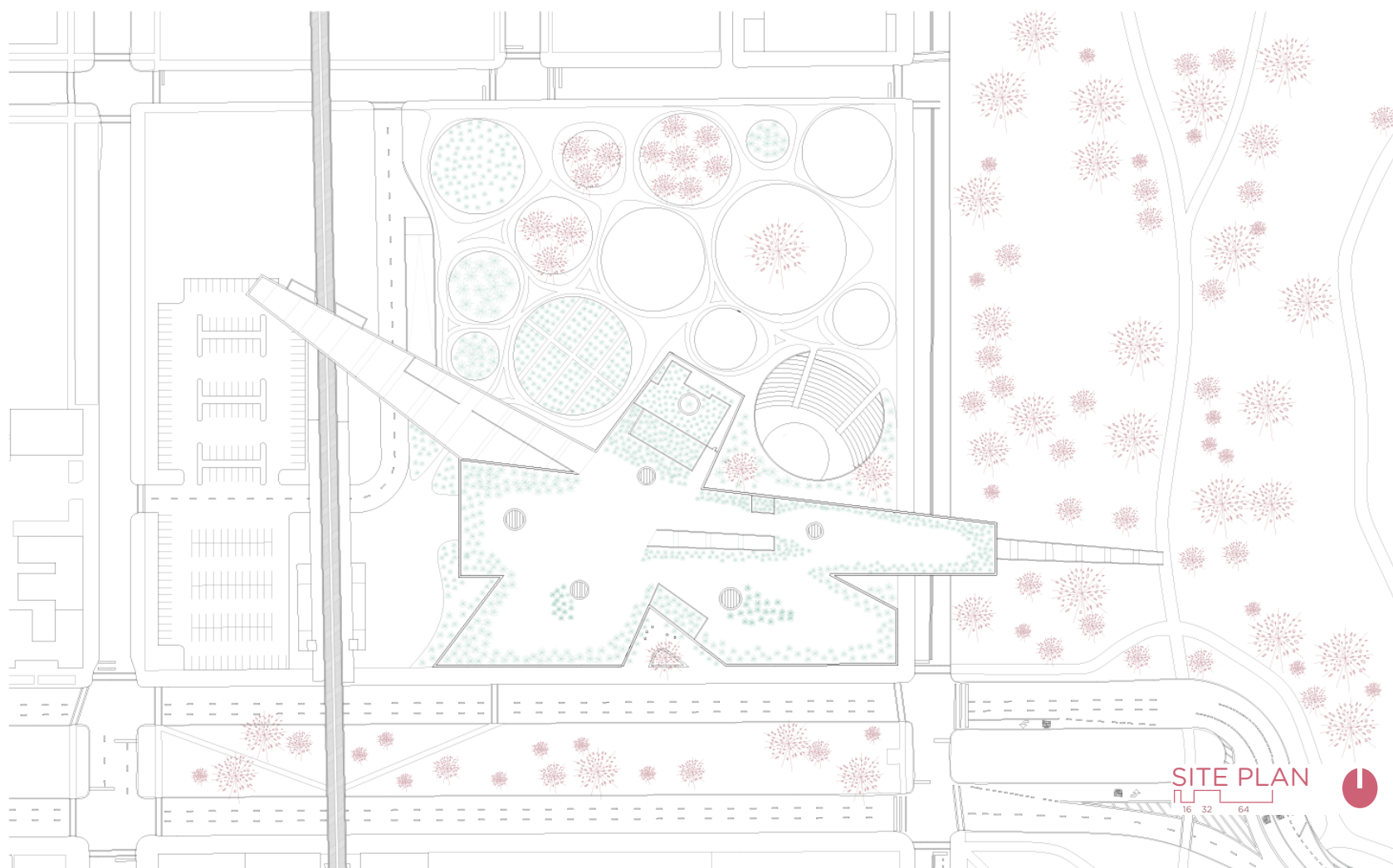


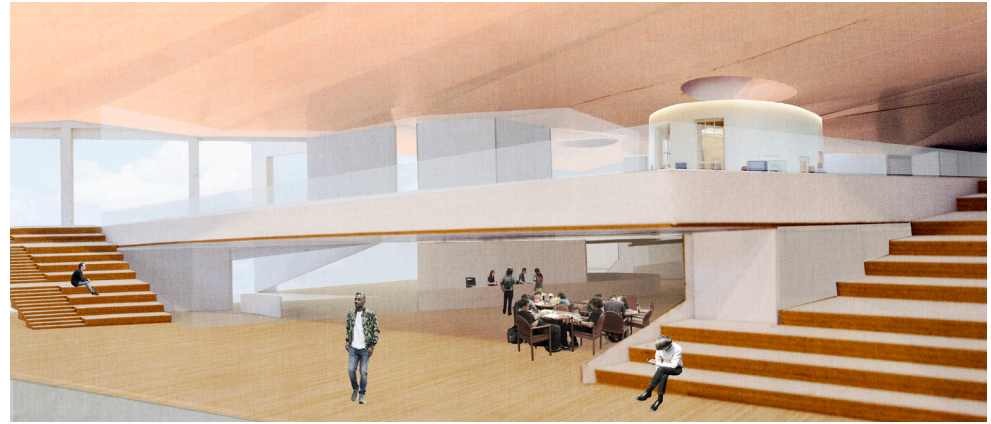
BASEMENT



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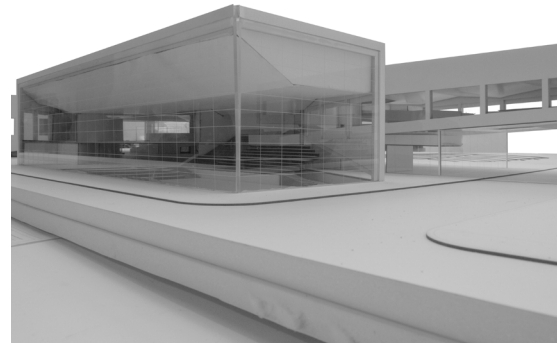
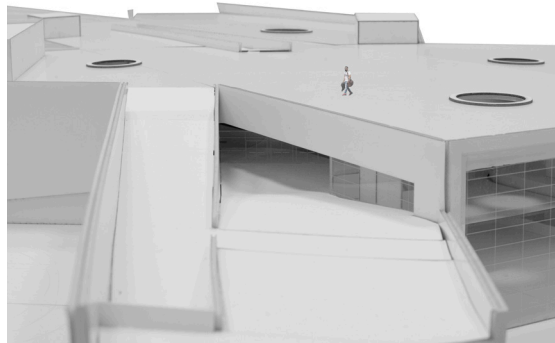




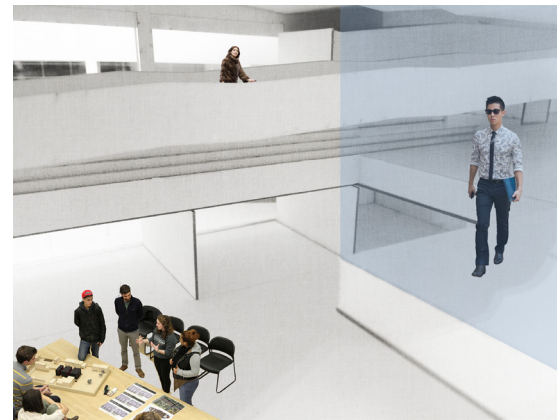
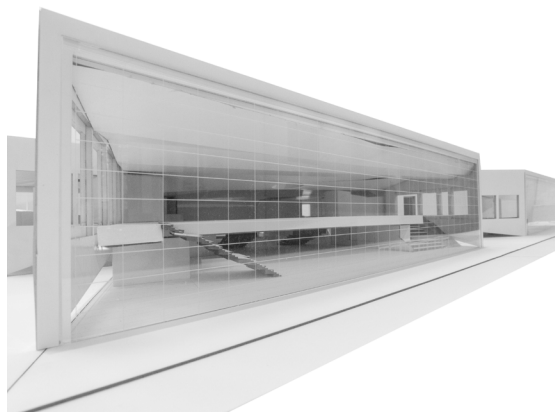


Above: (clockwise from top left): model photo of exhibition space; reading room entrance; basketball court; western entrance. Opposite: aerial perspective, facing north

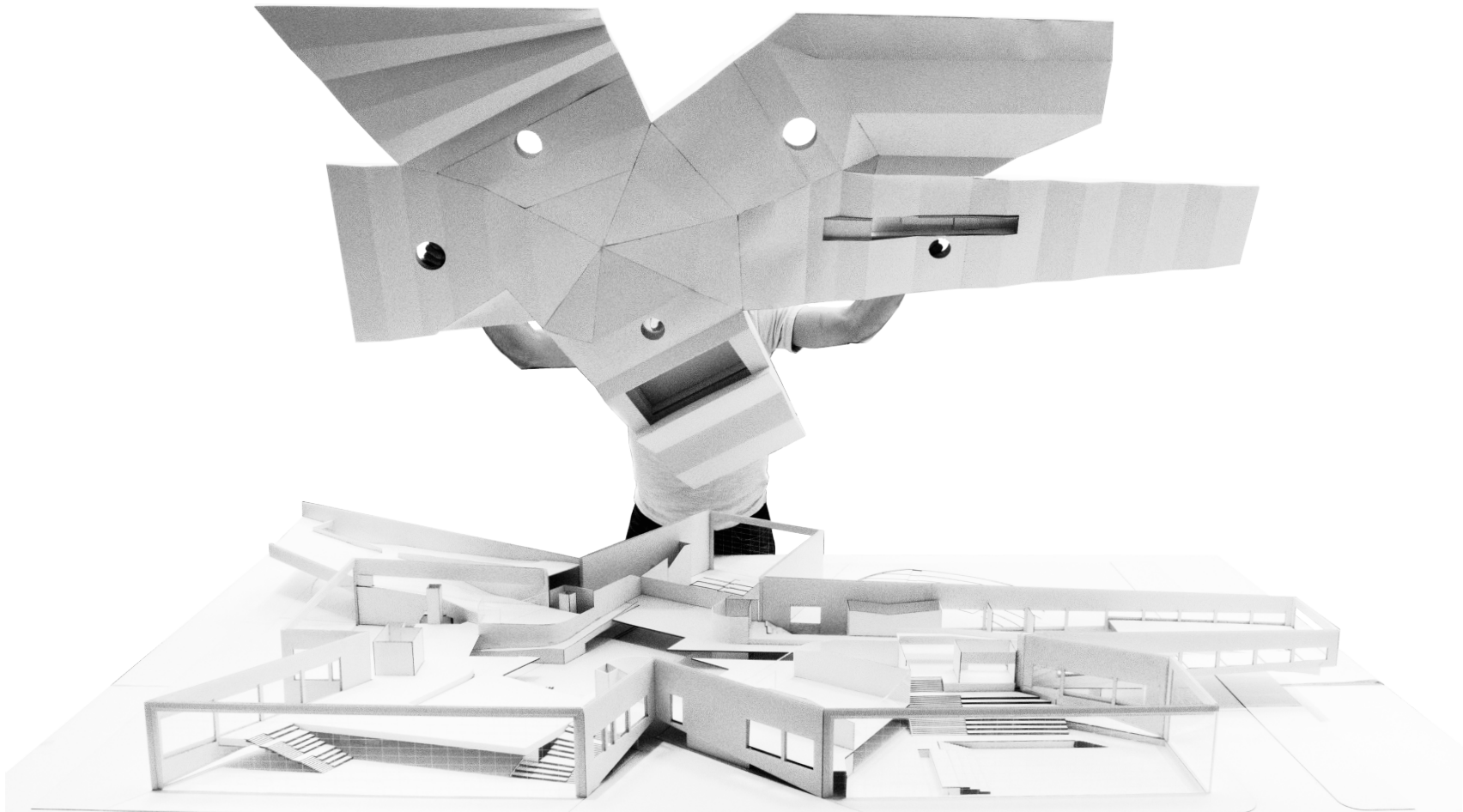
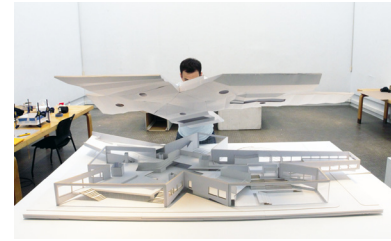
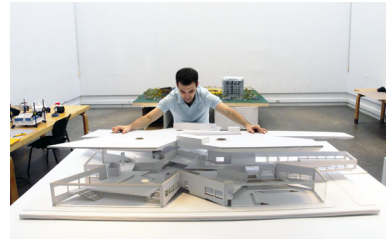
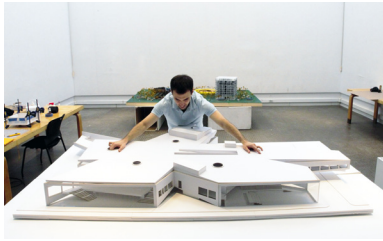


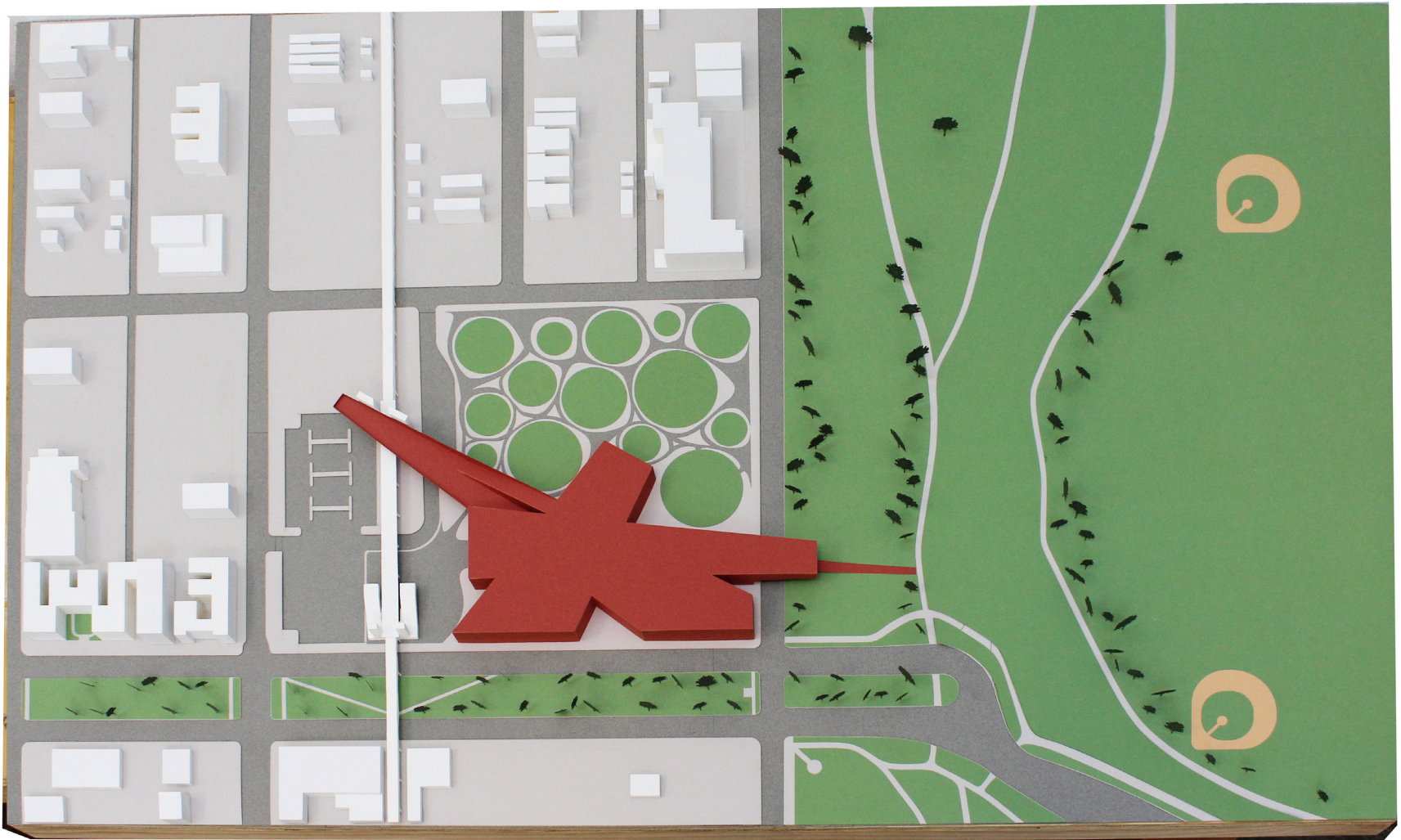


Left (clockwise from top left): model photos of bridge connection to elevated metro; corner of 55th and MLK Drive; looking from foundation office down into education zone; perspective from southwest entrance



Opposite: removal of model's roof, exposing undulating, continuous ceiling





Site Model



Final Building Model

Final Presentation





